

TOWN HALL PARK

The Town Hall Park is located near Wellesley Square. The park was deeded to the Town as Hunnewell Park, but over the years it has come to be known as the Town Hall Park. The land was owned in the 1850's by Dr. W.T.G. Morton, the dentist who discovered the use of ether as an anesthetic and who also did experimental farming. His land was subsequently purchased by Horatio Hollis Hunnewell and given to the Town in 1887.

The Town of Wellesley owes much to Mr. Hunnewell. He was a Boston banker who built his summer home on the shores of Lake Waban in 1852 in what was known then as West Needham. Mr. Hunnewell was active in the effort to separate the towns of East and West Needham. When this occurred in 1881, the Town of Wellesley was incorporated and named for the Welles Family, into which Hunnewell had married. He used 15 acres of the Morton estate to establish a library, Town Hall, and park for the Town. He employed the architectural firm of Shaw and Hunnewell to design the building that housed the Library and the Town Hall as well. The buildings were designed in the style of a French chateau and its walls contain rock from the Connecticut River Valley.

The library building took three years to complete. In 1883, Hunnewell gave the new library its start with a gift of 5000 books. The Town Hall, located to the west of the library, was completed in 1886. In addition, Hunnewell granted the land on which the building stands in 1888 and \$20,000 for its maintenance in 1897.

The grounds of the Wellesley Town Hall Park were designed in the English landscape tradition. The curved drive gives a relaxed gracefulness to the grounds. The lawns around the building were dotted with specimen trees and the Washington Street side was intended by Hunnewell to be an arboretum. The duck pond was redesigned from the Morton Farm. The pond was recently renovated and is a favorite spot for Wellesley residents and their children. Over the years, several changes have been made to Hunnewell's plan. The addition of a turn around drive to the west side of the building and a parking lot was added to the west end of the building along with a later driveway leading to Grove Street. In the 1950's, a new library was constructed directly across Washington Street from the Town Hall, and the books were moved to the new library, alterations were made, and Town Hall expanded into the old library space.

Maps of the park which identify each tree in the arboretum are available from the Town Engineer's Office, 455 Worcester Street, Wellesley Hills.